

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please cancel Claim 9.

1-9. (Cancelled)

10. (Currently Amended) A method comprising polishing a composite material containing silica and silicon nitride with an acidic polishing slurry comprising:

- (a) from about 0.1 to about 3.5% , by weight, of a colloidal silica abrasive,
- (b) from about 1 to about 6%, by weight, of a fluoride salt, and
- (c) wherein if the slurry has a temperature of 22 °C, the slurry has a pH ranging from about 2 to about 6.

11. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the fluoride salt is an ammonium salt.

12. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the fluoride salt is ammonium fluoride or ammonium hydrogen fluoride.

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the fluoride salt is ammonium hydrogen fluoride.

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the colloidal silica has a mean particle size of from about 10 nm to about 1 µm.

15. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 14, wherein the colloidal silica has a mean particle size of from about 20 nm to about 100 nm.